

CERHA HEMPEL

Legal alert – COVID-19 Post-emergency measures

Following the state of emergency in Bulgaria, which was in force between 13 March and 13 May 2020, the Bulgarian Government and Parliament introduced new legal framework which is to apply during the post-emergency situation. While some of the initial restrictions were lifted, other measures will continue to be in force. Most of the measures will apply until 14 June 2020.

This alert provides a brief overview of the new post-emergency framework.

Operation of commercial sites

Some restrictions applicable to restaurants, some commercial sites, including large shopping centers, have been lifted, and they can now partially or fully resume operation, whilst strictly observing certain anti-epidemic measures.

Some restrictions in relation to businesses shall remain until 14 June 2020, such as entertainment and gaming halls, night clubs remain closed, restaurants and coffee shops are only allowed to operate their outdoor areas, whilst the indoor areas shall remain closed for customers.

Employment

The emergency employment regulation basically remains unchanged until 14 June 2020. Among others, the following measures will continue to apply:

- Employers are generally required to organize home office work. Where this is not feasible, employers are required to implement specific anti-epidemic measures in the working premises, including regular disinfections, ensuring physical distance between employees of at least 1.5 meters, providing the employees with protective equipment, etc.
- The options of employers to impose usage of up to 50% of the paid annual leave of the employees without their consent, and to suspend business operations of the company, part of it or of particular employees.

Financing

- During the state of emergency period, the consequences of late payment under all financing agreements did not apply, including penalty interest. During the post-emergency period, similar rules will apply for additional two months (i.e. until 14 July 2020) with respect to financing granted by financing institutions other than banks and banks subsidiaries.
- The loan program of the Bulgarian Development Bank will be available until 23 December 2020. The program allows certain businesses to apply for preferential loans and enjoy various grace periods.

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State support

The financial support package, introduced by the Government in March, will be available to employers until 30 June 2020. Under this program the eligible employers can receive financial support amounting to 60% of their affected employees' salary and the social security contributions due by the employer.

Travel restrictions

The travel restrictions within the country have been lifted.

However entering Bulgaria remains restricted subject to limited exceptions, such as long-term residents and members of their families. Also, specific quarantine rules will continue to apply in relation to persons entering Bulgaria, which generally lasts 14 days, with certain exceptions.

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